

you that under President Clinton everything was rosy, there were no problems. That certainly was not the case, and I, personally, as an independent, had some strong disagreements with the Clinton administration on a number of issues, including trade. But it is important to understand, contrasting what Clinton accomplished for the middle class as opposed to what Bush did. In fact, MCCAIN's ideas are to follow economically the line of action that President Bush has established over the last 8 years.

During the Clinton administration, over 22 million new jobs were created. Were all of those jobs great-paying jobs? No, they were not. But 22 million jobs is a significant number of new jobs. Under the Bush administration, less than 6 million new jobs were created—22 million versus 6 million.

During the Clinton administration, 6 million Americans were lifted out of poverty. They went from poverty to the middle class. That is good. Under the Bush administration, the exact opposite occurred; 6 million Americans went from the middle class into poverty.

Under Clinton, median income went up. Under Bush, median income went down.

I am not quite clear how our colleague, Senator MCCAIN, believes that "the fundamentals of our economy are strong." The dynamic of what is going on in this country economically is that under the Bush-McCain economic policies, 99 percent of Americans have been net losers under President Bush's tax-and-spend policies. What we are seeing is a historical shift, a redistribution of wealth and income from the middle class to the very wealthy. We are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars going out of the pockets of the middle class, ending up in the pockets of the wealthiest 1 percent.

I sit on the Budget Committee. I have some sense of where this country is spending its money and where this country is not spending its money. I have very great concerns that 4 more years of Bush's policies, in which we continue to give huge tax breaks to the wealthiest 1 percent, while underfunding the needs of the middle class and working families, while ignoring our environment, while not investing in sustainable energy, while maintaining an absurd health care policy in which health care costs rise and in which more and more people are underinsured—I fear that 4 more years of those policies will create a situation from which the middle class of this country may never recover.

What the American dream has always been about is that parents work very hard—that was certainly the case within my family—to try to see their kids do better than they did. My parents never went to college. My parents never had much money. My parents never in a million years would have dreamed that their son would be a Senator. That is way outside their wildest

dreams. They worked hard so my brother and I could have a better life economically than they did.

What I worry about—and it is not just me, it is economists all over this country who are now looking at our economy, the fact that we are shedding millions of good-paying, blue-collar jobs, that we are shedding millions of good-paying, white-collar jobs—what economists are now saying is that for the first time in the history of this country our kids, the young people, our grandchildren, if we do not reverse tack, will have a lower standard of living than their parents.

In other words, the American dream, which is what the middle class has been all about, is now turned upside down. There are large numbers of working people today who are earning less money than their parents did while living in less adequate housing than their parents did. It seems to me, if there is anything we have learned over the last 8 years—in which President Bush has given an incredible amount of tax breaks to people who do not need them, in which we have deregulated industry, where we have ignored global warming and investing in sustainable energy—it seems to me, if there is anything we have learned in the last 8 years, it is that this trickle-down economics of tax breaks for billionaires and cutting back on the needs of ordinary people is not the direction in which this country should be moving.

Please count me in as someone who does not believe, as Senator MCCAIN does, that "the fundamentals of this economy are strong." I think the middle class is being shaken right now. People are frightened, and we need a new course for this country.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CHILD SOLDIERS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2008

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I am going to make a short statement in reference to S. 2135. After that statement, I will ask to lay before the Senate a Message from the House with respect to that.

I would like to say at the outset that this bill, S. 2135, is known as the Child Soldiers Accountability Act.

In January of 2007, at the beginning of this Congress, the Senate Judiciary Committee embarked on an experiment, establishing a new subcommittee, called the Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee. It was the first time in the 219-year history of the Senate that a subcommittee or committee focused specifically on the issue of human rights was formed.

I thank Senator PATRICK LEAHY, the Chairman of the Judiciary committee, for giving me the opportunity to serve as the first chairman of the Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee.

Senator TOM COBURN, Republican of Oklahoma, is the ranking member of the subcommittee. Senator COBURN and I disagree on many issues, but we have formed an unusual partnership in this subcommittee, working across party lines to address some of the most urgent human rights crises in the world.

One of the first hearings we held focused on the scourge of child soldiers.

We learned that up to 250,000 children currently serve as combatants, porters, human mine detectors and sex slaves in state-run armies, paramilitaries and guerilla groups around the world.

Under treaties that we have ratified, there is a clear legal prohibition on recruiting and using child soldiers. But, as we learned at our hearing, recruiting and using child soldiers does not violate U.S. criminal or immigration law.

Senator COBURN and I introduced the Child Soldiers Accountability Act to close this loophole in the law. This legislation will make it illegal under U.S. criminal and immigration law to recruit or use child soldiers.

This bipartisan bill will ensure that those who recruit or use children as soldiers will not find safe haven in our country. It will give the U.S. Government the tools to prosecute or deport the war criminals who commit this horrible human rights abuse.

The Child Soldiers Accountability Act passed the Senate unanimously last December. The Judiciary Committee in the House of Representatives held a hearing on the bill and made some thoughtful revisions. Earlier this week, the House passed the legislation unanimously. Now, the Senate is poised to send it to President Bush for his signature.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues in the Senate for supporting the Child Soldiers Accountability Act, especially, Senator COBURN, the bill's lead Republican cosponsor; Judiciary Committee Chairman LEAHY, a cosponsor who helped shepherd the bill through the Committee; and Senators RUSS FEINGOLD and SAM BROWNBACK, the bill's other original cosponsors.

I would also like to thank Members of the House of Representatives for their support, especially JOHN CONYERS and LAMAR SMITH, the chairman and ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee; BOBBY SCOTT and LOUIE GOHMERT, the chairman and ranking member of the Crime Subcommittee; and ZOE LOFGREN and STEVE KING, the chairman and ranking member of the House Immigration Subcommittee.

At our hearing on child soldiers, we heard moving testimony from a remarkable young man named Ismael Beah. Mr. Beah is a former child soldier and author of the bestselling book "A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy